

JAMES BURNHAM



CASE OF THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS: II

THE
THIRD
WORLD
WAR

A fortnight ago I reported the trial in Warsaw of five Polish graduate students for "hostile and harmful activity against Poland," "crimes against the good name and the interests of Poland and of socialism," and "work of diversion" as agents of the magazine *Kultura* and its editor, Jerzy Giedroyc, "financed by Radio Free Europe and CIA" with an assist from "international Zionism." I explained that the defendants were among the young Poles who, sharing the ideas and hopes of the Czech "Spring," had spread those ideas in Poland and traveled between Poland and Czechoslovakia to carry the news of what was happening in each nation to the youth of the other.

The trial of the five ended, it goes without saying, with verdicts of guilty and prison sentences. "The verdict confirms," commented *Le Monde* (Paris), "that it was in truth M. Giedroyc, editor of *Kultura*, who was being tried through stand-ins. This is why the Polish authorities sought the maximum possible publicity for the trial throughout the West and especially in France. They want the French government to clamp down on *Kultura's* activities."

Throughout the trial the European press, both East and West, continued the extensive coverage that I mentioned. The leading papers of Prague, Sofia, East Berlin, Bratislava and Belgrade daily featured reports, as did Moscow's *Izvestia* and *Pravda*. Aleksander Tarnawski, chief commentator of Radio Warsaw, covered each day of the trial in his regular evening broadcasts. He invariably centered his attack on *Kultura*, "one of the links in the system of psychological warfare directed against the socialist camp." *France-Solr* (Paris), describing the trial as "unprecedented . . . involving all the major problems of Communism," stressed the multiple geographic aspect, with five nations directly concerned:

Poland, Czechoslovakia ("the main focus of the affair"), France (because of *Kultura's* location and because two of the defendants had lived and studied in Paris), Israel ("the roots stretch all the way to Tel Aviv," as the Polish press put it) and Yugoslavia (where, according to the indictment, defendant Kozlowski, in conjunction with *Kultura*, wanted to establish a radio station). I was amused to find that the brochure published by the Polish propaganda agency entered my own name in the record, as organizer on behalf of Wall Street imperialism of the notorious Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom and co-conspirator of *Kultura*.

Dialectic of Repression

Paris Presse draws one of the significant conclusions: "Warsaw and Prague, Tel Aviv, Belgrade, Paris. . . It takes a big circle to contain all the fears of the Polish authorities. Everyone realizes that in spite of 'normalization' in Czechoslovakia and the disciplining of the universities in Poland, liberalism is not dead in those countries. This Warsaw trial and the one (still more serious) that will no doubt be held soon in Prague serve only to confirm this."

The *London Times* and *Le Solr* (Brussels) go on to a subtler point: "With negotiations to improve relations with Western Europe under way, the Polish authorities no doubt fear an increase in the influence of radical . . . opinions from the West" (*Times*). "The dialectic so much appreciated in the Marxist camp is implacable: the more relations with the West expand, the more the danger of 'ideological diversion' increases, the heavier the censorship becomes, the more restricted all civil liberties" (*Le Solr*).

Three further observations:

1) These mountain climbers did not see themselves as "enemies of the state"; what they did was hardly

enough to be classified as "dissidence" in this country. "The defendants behaved very courageously," remarks the *Times*. "They accepted most of the charges but refused to regard their acts as criminal." Nevertheless the totalitarian Communist state defined and punished their conduct as crime. Communism can exist only while the Party has a monopoly of organized political power. It cannot permit the smallest degree of political dissidence, above all if shared by numbers of persons, because dissidence would inevitably lead to opposition. "Born into socialism," declared defendant Szymborski, "we accept its ideals, but the impossibility of entering into a dialogue with the Power forced us into opposition."

How Much from Little

2) Dissidence, however, continues within the satellite nations. Whether or not Tibor Szamuely (*NR*, March 10) is right about the stabilization of the Soviet regime, the satellite regimes have not been fully stabilized, even after 25 years. No matter how much indoctrination, terror, purging, bribes, imprisonment, repression and whatever are tried, the dissent keeps cropping up and periodically erupts in mass displays. Everyone believed that after Hungary-1956 there could not be another mass action. But then there was Czechoslovakia-1968.

3) The role of *Kultura* in the Trial of the Mountain Climbers proves what an astonishingly powerful effect a small group of dedicated, intelligent and able persons can produce with a minimum of money. There could be this incommensurate result, of course, only because the potential is already present, waiting for catalysts. Who could predict what might happen if the resources brought into play were raised, to, say, a hundredth of those spent on seeking friendlier relations with the Communist regimes that jail young mountain climbers? □